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October 10, 1957

MEMORANDUM TO: The Operations Coordinating Board

FROM: F. M. Dearborn, Jr., Vice Chairman

SUBJECT: Report on Conferences With OCB Working Group Chairmen  
and With U.S. Mission Personnel in Asia

As requested by the OCB at its meeting on July 17, 1957, I met with the Chairmen of the working groups, or their alternates, during July and August 1957. At these meetings I asked for and received frank and thoughtful opinions on the OCB process as a whole and as it affected these individuals in particular.

During my trip to the Far East with the Chairman, August 23-September 22, 1957, I had most fruitful discussions about the OCB with the mission staffs in [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] These discussions were directed to the utility of the OCB process from the field viewpoint.

Condensations of Washington and field comments are attached as Annexes A and B. I commend them to your attention, with one caveat: several of the points raised have been met by administrative action of the Executive Officer or by the new forms used for operations plans and progress reports. Some repetition appears in these comments because they were made by members of different agencies. The diversity of opinions noted made evaluation difficult. However, I believe that the conclusions recorded later in this report reflect, for the most part, plurality opinion.

In general, I was pleasantly surprised at the acceptance already accorded the OCB process, by those who bear most of its burdens, as a necessary mechanism in modern U.S. government. Enthusiasm and dislike or a feeling of futility appeared at opposite ends of the spectrum with tolerance and a real desire to make the machine work occupying the middle ground. I think it is fair to say that the OCB is best received in the field by Ambassadors, who have found the operations plans and progress reports to be useful tools in their country team operations, and by non-State agencies. Finally, I have no question but what good impressions of, or simply acquaintance with, the OCB on the part of State Department and other agency personnel before assignment to the

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field lead such personnel to use OCB papers to a much greater extent in foreign posts than do those who have not had this experience. Therefore, I believe there must be continuing salesmanship if the purposes of, and underlying necessities for, the OCB are to gain full acceptance for the OCB as a mechanism of government.

Conclusions and Recommendations (indented)

1. The functions and mechanism of the OCB and the NSC are not as well known as they should be.
  - a. Distribute "The Structure and Functions of the National Security Council," dated July 1, 1957, to each U.S. Embassy and General Consulate serving a country or location covered by NSC policy.
  - b. Brief new ambassadors and senior field representatives of U.S. agencies on the OCB mechanism and its objectives before their departure on foreign assignments, if they have not had prior experience with the OCB.
  - c. Examine Washington distribution of OCB papers to see if they are reaching personnel charged with field contacts on agency programs.
2. Security classification of OPs and PRs is too high to permit full utilization.
  - a. Avoid TOP SECRET classification.
  - b. Classify OPs and PRs so they can be sent to all agency senior field representatives.
  - c. Examine possibility of CONFIDENTIAL classification for some OPs.
  - d. Except where necessary because of field security conditions, do not extract and downgrade individual courses of action in OPs. One of the principal values of the OPs is to show the over-all picture.

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3. Continuing efforts are needed to cut the time lag in production of OCB papers.

a. Immediately upon receipt of an NSC policy, the Executive Officer should discuss with the Board the forward agenda for production of an OP.

b. The background of important differences of opinion in the Planning Board and the NSC arising in the course of formulation of policy papers assigned to the OCB, should be reported to OCB working groups by the OCB staff representative immediately after assignment.

c. First drafts of OPs should be prepared by working groups, as at present, and sent to the field at once with instructions for prompt country team comment. Copies of these drafts should be furnished agency senior field representatives.

d. Agency representatives on working groups should have sufficient standing or authority to obtain agency agreement on OCB papers at the working group level. Accomplishment of this recommendation would assist greatly current efforts to keep the Board Assistants from having to delay papers with substantive revisions.

e. Distribute OCB papers to the field immediately on final approval by the Board or notation by the NSC, as the case may be.

f. Hold gap between approval of PRs by OCB and submission to NSC to not over two weeks.

4. Recently adopted forms for OPs, when known or explained, have received general approval.

a. In light of the differences of opinion as to how specific OP courses of action should be, ask for field comment on the new OP form as soon as used for a particular country.

b. Make clear that all agencies have a supporting role even if not specifically mentioned in OP courses of action.

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5. The idea of using NSC policy objectives and guidance in lieu of OPs has some support in the field.

Notwithstanding the apparent appeal of this idea, it is not practicable (a) because of classification of NSC papers, which prohibits necessary distribution, and (b) because it would require the OCB, if it is to fulfill its function of coordination, to clear each separate agency program in detail.

6. PRs are considered a useful tool for evaluation purposes and the new form is liked, but considerable confusion exists as to timing and content, and their usefulness can be increased.

a. At present directions are sent to the field to report progress each six months after receipt of the country OP. This procedure results in different times for reporting in areas like Southeast Asia which are covered by one policy and one PR and means that some countries have to send in supplemental reports to catch up with others which have received their OPs at a later date. Reports from each country in a policy area should therefore be called for on the same calendar dates.

b. The field should be asked to report on policy objectives and problems and on anticipated problems, and asked to recommend changes in OPs and NSC policies. Changes in OPs should be made an annex to PRs.

c. The OCB should ascertain from its agencies their present regular non-OCB reporting procedures, with a view to seeing if regular agency field reports could be used as the basis for PRs; thus eliminating special field reports for OCB purposes. If this were done, draft PRs should be sent to the field for comment and the recommendation in a, above, would not be necessary.

d. Final approved PRs should be sent promptly to the field to show Washington reception and evaluation of field reports.

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e. Consider permitting working group chairmen to recommend delay in submission of PRs, provided a monthly working group meeting has agreed that there is no need for a report and provided such delay will not upset scheduled reporting by the field. //

7. The sense of direct working group responsibility to the Board should be built up.

a. Working groups should be encouraged to generate agenda items for Board consideration.

b. The Board should be more alert to the possibilities of assigning interim specific tasks to working groups.

8. The OCB potential for obtaining quick action on spot inter-agency problems is not fully understood or utilized.

Obviously a field representative of a particular agency cannot ask his agency to place a problem before the Board, but OCB participating agencies should be encouraged to use this mechanism in connection with field, as well as Washington, problems.

9. The OCB's responsibility for timely and coordinated execution of policies and plans, in other words follow-up, is not being fully implemented:

a. Agency staffs responsible for devising agency plans should be familiar with agreed OCB courses of action.

b. Agencies which do not or cannot carry forward agency programs contained in OCB courses of action should report the reasons for not doing so. Except in emergencies, resulting changes in OPs should be incorporated in PRs.

#### Annexes

- A. Comments on OCB Mechanism by Working Group Chairmen, July 25, August 1, 8 and 15, 1957
- B. Field Comments on OCB Mechanism, Far East - August 23-September 22, 1957

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ANNEX A

COMMENTS ON OCB MECHANISM BY WORKING GROUP CHAIRMEN

July 25, August 1, 8 and 15, 1957

1. Where State chairs a country working group, an office director or deputy director should be chairman, with discretion to send substitute in exceptional cases only.

2. OCB procedure for fast coordination good, but misused if it produces snap judgments at OCB meetings without the proper staffing. ||

3. Should PRs be prepared when none really needed in light of (( local situation?

4. Combine PRs and OPs.

5. Be careful that assignment of responsibilities in OPs do not give heads of Defense, ICA, etc., missions implied authority to go behind chief of mission.

6. Eliminate OPs and use NSC policy guidance sections in field. OPs not very useful if policy paper has detailed guidance.

7. Eliminate editorial changes and minor suggestions at working group and Board Assistant meetings.

8. Departments should clear working group drafts to a reasonably high level before they get to Board Assistants.

9. Attempt to schedule witnesses so they will not waste time waiting for their appearances before Board Assistants and Board.

10. Does it take too long for policy papers to be incorporated in OPs? Also, there is too much delay between working group approval of draft papers and their consideration by the Board.

11. Non-State members on working groups cause delays because of tendency to interfere with operating responsibilities of State in the foreign field. However, the other agencies provide assets which State uses, so have to be in the act.

12. OCB a desirable vehicle in problems of general nature but not for day-to-day problems with one or two other agencies.

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13. Mixed reaction to monthly working group meetings - majority in favor.

14. PRs perform a service in informing others and bringing out problems that need coordination below the Board level.

15. PRs should be used to indicate anticipated difficulties and thus alert the Board and NSC.

16. Guidance paragraphs in OPs tend to be too general and contain too much intelligence.

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18. PRs more valuable to the working group than OPs. The latter should be directed more to combatting problems.

19. Let working groups try different formats for OPs. Should be more flexibility in format of OPs and PRs.

20. ICA and USIA not allowed to hold SECRET material in the field. Presents a problem where there are separate offices; therefore, downgrade material submitted to them.

21. More life needed in working groups. Therefore, Board Assistants should be limited in their editorial powers and should not introduce substantive issues; working group chairmen should have more direct responsibility to the Board and should be looked to for advice; working groups should be directed to generate suggestions for consideration; and the Board should assign interim specific tasks to working groups.

22. OPs should deal with realities rather than hopes.

23. State working group chairmen spend 30% of their time on OCB papers. Is this too much?

24. Working groups more effective when working on ad hoc basis because not tied down to routine papers.

25. Soviet bloc contingency papers serve useful purpose in focusing attention on the problem, but periodic revisions would not be productive.

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26. OCB work too routine - PRs useful as a review of what has happened but of no particular value at working group level; OPs are a paper exercise merely recording what is being done.

27. Tendency to pad OPs, possibly because policy courses of action are obsolete.

28. Non-State working group members do not produce enough and should participate more. The agencies who need help should come to the working groups with ideas.

29. Non-State working group members do not have substantive responsibility. Those members are not operators but tend to be special OCB staff members. They should have more authority in their agencies.

30. Restraint should be exercised in making interdepartmental problems OCB matters.

31. Processing of special matters, such as Yugoslav refugees, should be speeded up.

32. If there is nothing to report, PRs should not have to be made out semiannually, but should come out every 9 or 12 months. Use monthly meetings to check on whether a report is needed.

33. State desk officer now prepares the first draft of the policy paper, prepares an OP on the paper, and in PRs reports on what he, as the operator, has done. Others felt that, while this system might seem silly, it was, on the whole, helpful that the same person should be charged with planning and operations.

34. Working group membership should be kept to a minimum in order that the meetings do not become too large and cumbersome and, therefore, wasteful of time.

35. Hold the OCB papers to the minimum necessary. ||

36. Working group membership binds the members together closely; therefore, improves the informal contact mechanism for day-to-day coordination.

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